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and Christ, the special seed of promise. The Abrahamic covenant was essentially a revelation of the covenant of grace, "Confirmed of God in Christ," with whom it was primarily made, as the second contracting party and prospective fulfiller, and merely secondarily made with Abraham. Consequently the chosen seed, from the beginning, derived their whole federal standing, character and destiny from Christ as their Surety and Head. The words of promise by themselves might be understood as expressing plurality rather than individuality, yet they connoted unity, or many in one, the members in the Head. And still more specifically, the context also in which the promise sits and in the light of which it must be read, expressly singles out and signalizes one individual, one family, and one class of character, as destined to culminate in one person, whom both Abraham and Moses knew to be *the seed* of promise, the grand personage by whom the elect seed would realize their destiny. And hence both kinds of unity, which involve one another, are thus grammatically interpreted and summed up in the aptest terms,—“He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”\*

The meaning may be thus paraphrased and the application of the text to Christ personally is just—He speaks not of seeds as of several individuals, or of several sorts of seed, which he would have done had he meant both Isaac and Ishmael and their families, but he speaks as of one, Isaac personally, and his posterity, both genealogically and spiritually, which is Christ and the Church.

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## STUDIES IN ARCHÆOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION.

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VI.

### Nationality and Empire.

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In Volume Seven of “Records of the Past”—a series of books containing translations in English of the Chaldæan, Assyrian and Egyptian Monuments—is such a translation of one of the Chaldaic tablets to which the discoverer, Mr. George Smith, has given the name of the

#### LEGEND OF THE TOWN OF BABEL.

“The story which the tablet contains,” says another English scholar, Mr. Boscawen, who is the translator of it as it stands in the book just named, “appears to be the building of some great temple tower, apparently by command of the king. The gods are angry at the work, and so to put an end to it they con-

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\* 1 Sam. viii., 15 ד'ע"ר.—Mark iv., 31 σπέρματα. Matt. xiii., 31, 32.

fuse the speech of the builders." The tablet is badly broken, and parts of it have not been recovered, so that only a few lines are entire. The beginning and the end are both missing. We have therefore only a fragment of the legend, although enough, it seems, to satisfy the translator that it is indeed a portion of some more extended account, in legendary form, of events described in the eleventh of Genesis.

I will copy a few of the more significant portions. Being a fragment, it begins abruptly: in the middle of a line, in fact, only three words of the line being left. These three words are

"..... them the father ....."

Then come the following, in the first column of the tablet, referring evidently to the person, a king probably, by whose command the tower was built. The parallelism, or repetitions so common in all those old literatures, will be noticed. The words in parentheses are supplied:

(The thoughts) of his heart were evil.  
 ..... The father of all the gods he turned from.  
 (The thoughts) of his heart were evil.  
 ..... Babylon corruptly to sin went and  
     small and great mingled on the mound.  
     Babylon corruptly to sin went and  
     small and great mingled on the mound."

In the second column of the tablet, after a few broken lines, we find this:

"Their work all day they founded,  
     to their stronghold in the night  
     entirely an end he made.  
 In his anger also the secret counsel he poured out,  
     to scatter abroad his face he set,  
     he gave command to make strange their speech,  
     their progress he impeded."

These are the portions of the tablet best preserved and most significant. It does not appear to be quite certain that the words, "he gave command to make strange their speech," are a correct translation. Mr. Boscawen suggests, "make hostile their council," instead of "make strange their speech." Mr. George Smith translates, "small and great he confounded their speech." He also translates a column, very much broken, which Mr. Boscawen in "Records of the Past" omits, near the end of which we read, "Bitterly they wept at Babil, very much they grieved at their misfortune."

After making all allowance for the broken condition of the tablet, and for difficulties of translation, we seem justified in receiving this as a legend of Babel brought to Nineveh in about the eighth century before Christ from the ruins of some old Chaldean city, and discovered in late years in excavating upon the site of the great Assyrian capital. It bears in all respects the appearance of high antiquity, and may be one of the very oldest of human records. In spite of its legendary form and of its polytheistic features, its resemblance to the Scripture account is evident, while as compared with that account, it affords us another example of both the like and the unlike ways in which history and legend deal with the same event.

#### THE PEOPLE FROM THE EAST.

At the beginning of the eleventh chapter of Genesis, we are told how "the whole earth was of one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they

dwelt there." Whether or not that derivation of the name Shinar is correct which traces it to the two Hebrew words meaning "the two rivers," there is no doubt, I suppose, that it designates the extensive level country between the Euphrates and Tigris in the lower part of their course, which afterwards bore the name of Chaldæa. The expression, "the whole earth was of one language and one speech" clearly implies that a sufficient time had passed since the deluge for a very considerable increase in the posterity of Noah, such a statement having otherwise little or no significance. It would appear, however, that they held together, more or less, numerous as they may have become, and had been moving, from place to place, from that Ararat region in northern Armenia where the ark had rested, and where the family of Noah reared their first altar and made their first home. There may have been two reasons for these successive migrations. If we may assume that the first human abodes, after the creation of man, were in the valley of the lower Euphrates and Tigris, it would be quite natural that this original home of the race should be an object of desire to them, and an objective point in all their search for a final abode. And then, as their numbers increased, they would find that mountain country amidst which the Euphrates and Tigris have their source, less and less suitable for permanent residence. It may be supposed that, in search of a better region, and perhaps with some view to such a return to their primitive abode, they crossed to the east of the Tigris, then slowly descended that river till reaching the country now known as Persia; that from this they turned westward, and settled at last in the level country between the rivers, called in Scripture "the plain of Shinar," and in our oldest histories Chaldæa. Thus they came upon this level country, "as they journeyed from the east." All this may have occupied a considerable time; the intervals between the successive migrations may have covered years, or even generations. It is possible, too, that, from the main body, branches may have parted off; sections of them journeying to the east and north-east, and planting the seed of those Aryan and Mongol races whose annals, so far as they can be dimly traced, run so far up into pre-historic times.

However that may be, with the arrival of this people journeying from the east into the plain of Shinar, post-diluvian history begins. Whether or not primitive man in ante-diluvian times made his dwelling in that same quarter of the world, it is at least undeniable that all indications at present available, not only Biblical, but archæological and traditional, point to the plain of Shinar as the cradle of nationality and empire, the seat of the first settled form of human society, and the point from which the various nationalities branched away.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVENTS OF BABEL.

We see at once, in this view, the significance of that which occurred at Babel, as the absolute point of departure in the history of nationality and empire. Perhaps we may say that the basis of nationality is community of language; and a beginning of diversity of nationality would naturally be diversity of language. A question arises here which, I think, we might be glad to answer, if we could,—What form did this diversity of language first take, and what formal relation does it bear to diversity of nationality? One thing it seems as if we might assume, and this is, that the "confounding" of the speech of the builders need not be taken in any absolute sense. We are accustomed to speak of the incident as a "confusion of tongues." Can we suppose, after all, that this change of

human speech, as directed by divine wisdom, would be a change of intelligible language into mere jargon? It seems more rational to assume that the divine foresight and provision in the matter would anticipate the history that was to follow; not merely a dispersion of the human race, but the re-gathering in distinct nationalities, and all those relations between various nationalities which result from a knowledge of their community of origin, testified to by the fact of their cognate forms of speech. Not much, therefore, is hazarded, if we assume that this original division of the speech of mankind was such in nature and effect as to supply at least the elements of that classification in distinct families of language, which now, to the comparative philologist, is as certain as any other fact of his science.

Some support for this is found in the language used upon the oldest tablets. Readers of these papers are, of course, familiar with the fact that languages are now classified in three, by some philologists in four, great families; the Hamitic, the Semitic, the Aryan (or Indo-European), and the Turanian; this last including all that confused variety of tongues spoken by savage and barbarous races. Mention has before been made of the indications found, in the oldest Chaldæan tablets, that the most ancient language of which monuments are yet traced, bore resemblances to all four of these several great families, as they afterwards became. It may, some day, be found possible to say that, when the migrations from that primitive seat of the race began, each colony, whether moving to the east or to the west, already had at least an incipient bond of union in elementary forms of speech which grew, ultimately, into the languages spoken, for example, by all the nations descended from the children of Ham, or by those who traced their common ancestry in the descendants of Shem, or those sons of Japheth from whom all the Indo-European nations, including our own, have come, or the wild tribes which wandered away, with little or no bond of union amongst themselves, and became the uncivilized and uncivilizable masses of both the ancient and the modern world.

Something like this may some day be ascertainable. For the present, we can only say that the theory is not without plausible support. So far as discovery has gone, it sustains fully the Scripture narrative; and we may say of this as of other things, that every new achievement in archæology is a new witness to the truth of the Bible. In general, then, we are safe in noting as the point of outset in the whole history of nationality since that day, this incident of the breaking up of the one human speech, which broke up also the unity of the race as it then stood, and began that mighty dispersion and colonization and occupation of the world's vast territories, which has gone forward until this hour. All ascertainable evidence, thus far, sustains also the Scripture statement, that "the beginning" of the first kingdom "was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar." These cities, or their ruins, have come again to the light of day, after having been buried for thousands of years. Their identification, with that of another noted city, "Ur of the Chaldees," is believed to be certain. The first cities, after the Flood, were these, and the first man to establish anything like sovereignty seems to have been the "mighty hunter" himself.

#### EGYPT AND CHALDÆA.

The two great names in that ancient time to which our present study takes us back, were Egypt and Chaldæa. Which of these has the priority in point of date seems not quite agreed. Some seem to think that previous to the founding

of a kingdom by Nimrod, there had not only been a considerable period during which a kind of semi-patriarchal, semi-kingly rule had been maintained in what was afterwards known as Chaldæa, but that in the meantime a migration westward to the banks of the Nile had occurred, and a kingdom and a nationality been founded there. This seems to be Rawlinson's view, who urges in favor of it the fact, as he states it, that "the civilization in the land of the Nile is of greater antiquity than that in the land of the Euphrates." This consideration loses much of its force when we remember how the Egyptian monuments which testify to this early civilization are in most instances of the most solid material, the absolutely imperishable granite; while those of Chaldæa were often of merely oven-dried bricks, and never of stone. Added to which is that, though beginning later, the Egyptian civilization may have reached a high state of perfection much earlier than that of Chaldæa, owing to favoring causes.

At all events, with these two the great and checkered story of empire begins. Students of the monuments, confirming intimations of Bible history, tell us of a time when the world's two great centres were on the Euphrates and the Nile. Ur of the Chaldees, the first capital of the empire of Chaldæa, as we are told, shared the supremacy with Thebes and Memphis. The Chaldæans, whose "cry" was even then "in their ships," were the world's first merchants. Commerce sent its first ships down the Persian Gulf into the Indian Ocean, and eastward and westward along a coast which, however abandoned and desolate now, was then thronged with people. Civilization and science had their birth on the Euphrates and the Nile. Where the Arab now builds his mean hut and floats his rude skiff, argosies of the world's earliest commerce sailed up and down. And in that other land where now the daily story is of imbecility and outrage, empire and civilization achieved what has been from that time till now the wonder of both the ancient and the modern world.

#### SOME HARD QUESTIONS.

Difficult questions present themselves here, upon which something should be said. One of these is suggested by the fact of the remarkable development which nationality, empire and civilization had attained, at the time when the continuous Bible history begins, especially as compared with the interval which accepted chronology allows for, between the Flood, and that beginning in the time of Abraham. This chronology would give us an interval of a little more than four hundred years between the flood and Abraham's departure out of Chaldæa. With Abraham the continuous Scripture narrative, in that part of it, opens; and in his time we find what, at first, may surprise and perplex as regards the apparent numbers to which the race had grown from those eight persons who came with Noah from the ark, and as regards what seems like national organization and the growth of great empires. Egypt, in Abraham's time, appears as a well-organized kingdom, quite populous apparently, with its Pharaoh and its kingly court. In Chaldæa, if the tablets lately found are read aright, the kingdom founded by Nimrod has, at that date, already run its course, and the sovereignty of that whole region has passed into the hands of a king, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, as we find him called in Genesis, who comes into the Scripture narrative as a conqueror, and the ruler of a wide region. Twelve years before the time when he appears in the history he had invaded the Jordan valley and had reduced to the condition of tributaries the kings of Sodom, of Gomorrah, of Admah, Zeboim and Zoar. These having now revolted, and cast off his supremacy, he comes a second time,

bringing with him Amraphel, king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, and Tidal king of nations;—these, it is supposed, being also tributaries of the Elamite ruler. In this expedition, we read how he smites Rephaim, and Zuzim, and Emim, and the Horites in Mount Seir, south of the Dead Sea, and then, returning northward, all the country of the Amalekites, till at last he falls upon those cities in the Jordan valley, and defeating their kings in a battle, carries them away captive. In this narrative we have, so far as authentic history is concerned, the very beginning of the long story of invasion, and battle, and conquest, the weaker subdued by the stronger, and a great empire formed out of subject nations and kings. For the students of those old Chaldæan tablets tell us that this Chedarlaomer turns out to have been a great conqueror; that at one time all Western Asia was subject to him, from the Persian Gulf to Damascus, and from Elam on the east of the Tigris and bordering on Chaldæa to the Mediterranean. His ascertained line of march, up the Euphrates to the region of Damascus, and then southward to the mountains and wildernesses south of the Dead Sea, then westerly to Kadesh and north again through Canaan to the cities on the Jordan—this is now with students of biblical archaeology a sort of chart for tracing ancient sites, and identifying Scripture names. Place all this with what the Egyptian monuments up to the time of Abraham disclose, and does it not seem as if the period of four hundred years is too brief a one for such a development and growth in human affairs?

We must remember, for one thing, that the word “king” cannot have meant, then, all that is understood by this word now. Neither the king of Sodom, nor the king of Gomorrah can have been very much of a potentate. Nor can this army of Chedorlaomer have been what would now be called a formidable one. If it had been so, would Abraham’s small force of three hundred and eighteen have won a victory so complete and so easy? Then, we may underestimate the probabilities of growth in population during even the period supposed. Dr. Murphy, in his Commentary on Genesis, estimates that during the four hundred years, more or less, between the flood and Abraham—about ten generations, as he computes it—the human race may have increased to the number of fifteen millions; and the author of the Pulpit Commentary says that, “supposing a rate of increase equal to that of Abraham’s posterity in Egypt, during the four hundred years that elapsed from the call to the Exodus, the inhabitants of the world in the time of Abraham would be between seven and eight millions.” Then, as to what changes may come about in the course of four centuries, remember that this is now the exact period of time since the Reformation. Has not the world changed wonderfully since the time of Luther and Calvin, of Leo X. and Henry VIII.? A good many things may happen in the course of four hundred years; and, indeed, of one hundred years. Added to all which, is the fact that the posterity of Noah did not begin a new career from the starting-point of barbarism. Such a structure as the ark is described to have been proves in its builders the possession of mechanical skill far enough removed from the blundering achievements of barbarians. Where is the hazard of assuming that ante-diluvian knowledge and skill in many things passed over through Noah and his sons to their posterity, and that cities rose and grew on the banks of the Euphrates and Nile, very much as they grow up now on some great river in Dakota or Montana? Let us not, at least, bring into questions of interpretation for this ancient story of “first things” found in the Bible, *unnecessary* difficulties.

## UNCERTAINTIES OF CHRONOLOGY.

Two or three suggestions further may be added on this point. (1) One is that, as time passes, and knowledge of the remains of that ancient world increases, the views of archæological experts seem to undergo considerable modification as to the antiquity, for example, of Egyptian civilization. Twenty or thirty years ago, the date of Mena, the first Egyptian king, was fixed by some Egyptologists at the absurd figure of B. C. 20,000. The highest figure now given, according to Brugsch, is between five and six thousand, while the lowest is between three and four thousand. (2) Another fact, here, is that Egyptologists still differ widely on the subject, showing that material for any final conclusion has not yet been found. They differ from each other, as to the date of Mena, by no less an interval than that of more than two thousand years. (3) Still another consideration is that we are not shut up to a strictly literal interpretation of what seems the Scriptural Chronology for this period. When Cush and Mizraim are spoken of as the sons of Ham, and certain others as the sons of Shem and Japhet, we are not shut up to maintaining that these were literally sons. It would be consistent with the Scripture phraseology, as we know, to regard them simply as descendants. So in tracing the ancestry of Abraham.

In short, while the chronology of the Egyptologists is approaching that of the received Scripture interpretation, this interpretation itself is found capable of modification, so as that the two systems may one day be in substantial, if not in entire harmony. And even if a correct Scripture interpretation hold us to the four hundred years, literally, the history of that period itself is subject to revision, so as to qualify very materially the statements in that regard now made. The date of such monuments as the pyramids, for example, may be brought down to more recent times. The beginning of what is called the pyramid period, Sir Gardner Wilkinson fixes at B. C. 2450. The latest results of study in biblical chronology, I believe, date the Flood at B. C. 2515. Wilkinson has much to say of the surprising progress in the arts made by the Egyptians, up to that time. He appears to assume that the progress was from a beginning of substantial barbarism. As already shown, we know from the Bible that the first men after the deluge were by no means barbarians, but very likely possessed of a knowledge and skill in the arts for which they have never yet received credit. Then the date fixed for the pyramids, and that whole system of Egyptian chronology is partly conjectural, and subject to constant revisal. It may be found, in the end, that the Bible story of that early time may be taken with very little change in the customary interpretation of it.

I will very soon pass from this; but before I do so, I would like to briefly name one fact which is significant as to the primitive character of the Egyptian monarchy in its original foundation. Mena, as I have said, was the first king. Lepsius, although, as just mentioned, neither this nor any other date is to be taken as final, fixes his reign at about B. C. 3600. Brugsch tells us that "he is said to have been the first lawgiver in Egypt, but to have corrupted the simple manners of the olden time, in that he replaced the frugal mode of life by royal pomp and sumptuous expense. Long after his time—as the story went—Technactes, or Tnephactus, the father of the unfortunate king Bocchoris, on the occasion of an expedition against the revolted nations of the Arabs, was compelled to forego this royal costliness of living. But the simple bed and fare of the desert pleased him so much, that he resolved henceforth to



practice temperance. He further commanded the priests to engrave his royal resolution upon a stone of memorial, which contained curses against Mena, and to set it up in the temple of Amon at Thebes."

It looks as if Mena may have been in Egypt what Nimrod was in Chaldæa. He certainly was a great builder like Nimrod, for Memphis was founded by him. He seems also, like Nimrod, to have changed a simple and patriarchal into a kingly form of government. Neither the one nor the other may have been a *great* king in the modern sense of the words; and nothing that is recorded of either need embarrass us in holding that we can bring all that is likely to prove true of either Egypt or Chaldæa, within the compass of a moderate chronology.

#### EMPIRE AND RELIGION.

But, now, what of all this, in relation to the subject of the world's great religions? Upon this I will briefly give a few points.

1. The first is that, as far back as any records will carry us in a study of the world's great empires, we find them already polytheistic and idolatrous. The fact shows how soon the great powers of the world set themselves against a true knowledge of God, and illustrates the utter inveteracy of that tendency in human nature of which Paul speaks in the first of Romans. Perhaps we may say that what is told us in the story of Abraham suggests the existence in his time, of a "remnant" in some parts of the world, at any rate, who held to a true faith. There was, in those times, a Melchisedek, as well as an Abraham; and there may have been others. But the great body of the people and the reigning powers were already idolatrous at the oldest date to which the monuments carry us up. This strange tendency toward polytheism and idolatry will come in view once more in the next of these papers. For the present, let the fact itself be noted.

2. In the second place, as population grew, and migration diffused the race more widely, and other empires grew and flourished, the same fact remained invariable. It is a familiar and common-place fact, but a most notable one, all the same. There were monotheistic elements in some, if not all, of these religions, as will appear hereafter, and great men were providentially raised up who, according to the measure of the light they had, withstood the universal tide of corrupt and corrupting idolatry. But it was a tide that could not be withstood for any length of time. As we trace the course of empire, from Egypt along the North African coast; from Chaldæa, eastward to the Indus, and so at last to the Pacific, where the greatest and one of the oldest of these great nationalities is to-day as strong in its age of thousands of years as it ever was; as we follow the path of our Aryan ancestors north-eastwardly from Chaldæa, across the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush, and see them amidst the mountains or on the wide plains of that rude region; as we turn again westwardly to the shores of the Ægean and the Adriatic, and watch the growth of Grecian and Roman power—always, as respects religion, the story is the same. There is endless diversity in the number and names of the gods, in forms and rites, in the nature and measure of corrupting and degrading tendency; but nowhere, along all this range of world-wide migration, and along this march of troubled and stormy centuries, save in one little corner, do you find a true religion. You can track the path of human migration over the world by the smoke of idolatrous altar-fires, and by the towering domes of idolatrous temples and pagodas.

3. Then, again, it is found to make little or no difference in the religion of a people, whatever its attainment in sciences, in arts, in culture, in civilization. A strange sight it is, to see an Egyptian teacher at whose feet Plato does not disdain to sit, worshipping, or seeming to worship, a bull or a crocodile! Strange to hear a Socrates, in his very last words, as he is about to drink the hemlock, request one of his weeping disciples to offer a cock in his name to Esculapius! Strange to find that neither a Buddha nor a Confucius, wise beyond all the uninspired men of their era, and models of human virtue in many ways, is able to grasp and hold right religious ideas! This is natural religion. This is its record on the same pages that record the history of empire and civilization. This is what man, at his best, attains, when uninspired or unhelped by that which is better than himself.

4. Meantime, last of all, we cannot but be struck with the method and the means of divine providence, in preserving among men, after all, a true religion. It would, perhaps, have been according to human wisdom to make some one of these great empires the instrument of such a purpose. Divine power could have done it, unquestionably. There is no reason, in the mere nature of things, why Memphis, or Babylon, or Athens, or Rome should not have been the true Holy City. There might have been enlisted on the side of the true religion imperialism in its most commanding form, and civilization at the seats of its very highest perfection. What *did* take place was the selection of a mere corner of the world, a narrow region between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, less than a hundred and fifty miles in average length, and only forty miles in breadth, about the size of one of the smaller New England states. Here God planted a people who never had in them the elements of a great and united nationality. Their history, upon its secular side, is one of the most checkered, and one of the least creditable ever written. Even on its religious side, it is, during centuries, a story of lapses into idolatry and recovery out of idolatry; most precious revelations dimly apprehended, prophetic ministries disparaged, disregarded, even persecuted; a chosen people to whom God had spoken "in voices and thunders and lightnings," and among whom he had manifested himself in wonders and miracles such as were never seen in any other nation, yet often forsaking the altars of their own Jehovah for those of the cruel Moloch or the obscene Ashtaroth. How could a religion, alone against the whole world, and the gates of its citadel thrown wide by the hands of its own defenders—how was such a religion even to survive?

The history of religion, in all the annals of the race, from the beginning, as we very well know, is the history of a triumph of the weak over the strong, looking at things on their human side. It is that lamp of Israel, shining there in a corner of the dark world, itself at times almost extinguished, somehow become a very sun in the heavens. It is the truth embodied and symbolized in Hebrew institutions, and uttering itself in Hebrew literature, persisting through centuries of almost universal error and ignorance; or, as I may say, it is a seed of truth, simply *the truth*, not an institution, not a system, not a hierarchy, not even a church, but *the truth*, simply and alone, germinating in a soil apparently the most unfriendly, and growing and spreading, especially in the fulness of time, until now there is scarcely a hill-top in all the world upon which you may not see its branches waving. To me there is unspeakable inspiration, comfort and courage in this. We may not be great in ourselves; we may not have the world on our side; we may be often cast down and disheartened; but while we have the truth, and preach the truth, God gives us the victory.